

FORM



**TUESDAY 16th and WEDNESDAY
17th SEPTEMBER 2025**

Lecture Theatre
Oxford University Museum of Natural History
South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PW

NO TICKET NEEDED | PROGRAMME

**Making
the
Museum**

FORM

The logo for 'Making the Museum' features a stylized yellow house-like shape with a black square inside. The text 'Making the Museum' is written in white, with 'Making' and 'the' on one line and 'Museum' on the line below.

The Pitt Rivers Museum is home to many objects that have been formed, in a variety of ways and in many materials. Thinking about forming invites questions about the temporality and processes of making, about the politics of labour, and about the affordances of the materials we choose to make with.

Objects on display carved from stone, wood, and ivory, are the results of subtractive carving methods that result in the final form after material is gradually removed. Other objects, such as pots and metal cast sculptures as the result of additive processes, where forms slowly emerge from added material. Both are forming processes involving the thinking hand, but are they fundamentally different? How might museums understand these objects in new ways by learning from practitioners about the different interactions and practices involved in both subtractive and additive forming?

Forms and creativity also exist in the brain, not as isolated phenomena, but of the whole body. As one of the earliest philosophical concepts, forms have a long history. In this workshop we seek to understand how embodied knowledge, skill, and material forms are part of the mind. If cognition is the interaction between brains, bodies, and material forms (Malafouris), then what can placing museum objects in dialogue with contemporary practitioners and researchers reveal about their original makers, and by extension the very museum itself? Can a renewed focus on form and forming help us recover new information about makers in instances where archival information about makers has been lost or is missing from the historical record?

In this multi-day workshop, academics and practitioners will come together to discuss and explore through practice what it means to form something.

This workshop forms part of the 'Making the Museum' Project; the first major research project in an ethnographic museum to investigate maker identities and agencies across the breadth of its collections. Through detailed analysis of the Museum's database, associated documentation, objects and archives, alongside a pioneering series of maker research fellowships the project aims to transform our understanding of the knowledge, skills, and cosmologies embedded in objects, as well as their continuing power for people today.

Find out more at: <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/making-museum>

FORM



16th September

13:30-15:00 SESSION I

Chair: Beth Hodgett

**Jim Keeling and Hannah Yeadon in conversation with Jennifer Lucy Allan
(clay)**

Jim Keeling is a Master Craftsman with a passion for rediscovering heritage craft skills and keeping alive communal and studio working practices. After completing a degree at the University of Cambridge, and an apprenticeship at Wrecclesham Pottery in Farnham, in 1976 he established Whichford Pottery in Warwickshire. With a team of over 25 craftspeople and a world-renowned reputation, Whichford Pottery is now the last remaining mass manufacturer of flowerpots made entirely by hand in the UK.

Hannah Yeadon has been working as a professional ceramicist since 1994. Her work explores form, function and the question of how to convey complex philosophical ideas through simple, abstract forms. She has exhibited nationally at venues including the V&A, the Craft Council Gallery in Islington, The Scottish Gallery in Edinburgh, and the Bluecoat Centre in Liverpool. She was the recipient of a Craft Council Grant which enabled her to found a studio practice, and completed an MA in ceramics at Bath Spa University in 2018.

Jennifer Lucy Allan is a British writer, researcher and radio presenter. Allan has written for *The Guardian*, *The Quietus* and *The Wire*. She was a presenter on Resonance FM, and is co-host of the BBC Radio 3 programme *Late Junction*. Allan's book *The Foghorn's Lament* (2021) developed out of her PhD research at University of the Arts London. Her most recent book is *Clay: A Human History* (2025) which fuses together, archaeology, history and lived experience as an amateur potter to explore the story of humankind and our relationship to this enigmatic, ancient material.

15:00-15:30 COFFEE BREAK

FORM



16th September

15:30-17:30 SESSION 2

Chair: Becky Martin

Joseph Ijoyemi and Ems Orving in conversation with David Pratten
(**metalwork**)

Joseph Ijoyemi is a multidisciplinary Swedish-Nigerian artist whose work navigates the intricate layers of cultural heritage, migration and identity. He recently graduated from Central Saint Martins with an MA in Fine Art, and his work has been shown in the Peabody Museum and Royal Museum's Greenwich, as well as being shortlisted for the Evening Standard Prize and winning the Helen Scott Lidgett Award. His recent project *Tracing Roots: Exploring Nigerian Heritage Through Ondo's Treasures* involved working with local artisans in Nigeria to explore traditional crafts like blacksmithing and goldsmithing, while blending these practices with contemporary art.

Ems Orving is the resident blacksmith at Tooley's Boatyard in Banbury, a historic forge and dry dock founded in 1778. Ems was recently the recipient of the Frank Day Trophy from the Worshipful Guild of Blacksmiths (2022). As a research partner on the 'Making the Museum' Project, in April 2025 Ems collaborated with 6th generation Benin bronze caster Phil Omodamwen to create two brass commemorative heads representing the Oba (king) of Benin, using the forge fire, a small crucible, and traditional blacksmithing tools.

David Pratten is a social anthropologist, working across the African Studies Centre and the Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford. studied at Oxford, Manchester and SOAS, and previously taught at the universities of Edinburgh and Sussex. David's research is based on a long-term engagement with Annang villagers in south-eastern Nigeria and focuses on themes of history, violence and the state. His research has examined issues of youth, democracy and disorder in post-colonial Nigeria with a particular focus on vigilantism and new masquerade performances.

18:00 DRINKS AND DINNER (For speakers,
attendees welcome to join and pay your own way)

The Royal Oak, 42-44 Woodstock Rd, Oxford, OX2 6HT

FORM



17th September

13:30-15:30 SESSION 3

Chair: Chris Morton

Matthew Wordsmith in conversation with Will Rea (stone)

Matthew Wordsmith studied Biotechnology and International Business at South Bank University, and worked as a professional chef, and then in journalism and academic publishing before retraining in stone masonry. Matt was recently awarded a Journeyman grant from the Lettering Arts Trust to develop his letter cutting practice, and has worked under the mentorship of Bernard Johnson at the Pig Sty, in Kiddlington. Matt's practice explores the permanence of stone, and views letter cutting as an extension of publishing practices.

Will Rea works across the fields of Anthropology and Art History, and has previously taught at UCL, SOAS, and Goldsmiths. His research explores issues of identity and performance in the masquerades of the Ekiti Yoruba in Nigeria, and the way in which the historical moment of British colonialism is reflected in the arts (especially in carvings) in the wider Yoruba polity. Other strands of his work explore British 20th Century sculpture, and in this capacity, Will joined the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies in Leeds in 2000; initially as Henry Moore Fellow in sculpture studies, and then leading the MA in Sculpture Studies, working with the Henry Moore Foundation.

Morten Kringelbach & Tim Flach (mind)

Morten Kringelbach is Professor of Neuroscience at University of Oxford, and founding director of the Centre for Eudaimonia and Human Flourishing. Working with an interdisciplinary team of philosophers, psychologists, musicians, artists, social scientists, physicists, biologists, anthropologists, and neuroscientists, Morten's research explores the concepts of *hedonia* (pleasure) and *eudaimonia* (the life well-lived), and how they are affected in health and disease. His research uses advanced neuroimaging, neurosurgical and whole-brain modelling methods to understand brain function. Morten is also a fellow of Linacre College and a principal investigator at the Center for Music in the Brain, and the Flavour Institute (Aarhus University, Denmark).

Tim Flach is a photographer known for his captivating and thought-provoking images of the animal kingdom. His work has been exhibited at Natural History museums worldwide, and has seven international award-winning books; each of which brings new visual perspectives of wildlife and conservation, investigating how cultivating empathy can lead to pro-environmental outcomes. Tim has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of the Arts London (Norwich) and an Honorary Fellowship by the Royal Photographic Society. He is also Senior Research Fellow and Artist in Residence at the Centre for Eudaimonia and Human Flourishing, and serves as President of the Association of Photographers.

15:30-16:00 COFFEE BREAK

FORM



17th September

16:00-17:30 SESSION 4

Chair: Liz Hallam (TBC)

Ekta Bagri & Poojan Gupta in conversation with Chris Dorsett (waste/ re-use)

Ekta Bagri is a ceramicist and visual artist from Kolkata, India. She received a Master's degree in Ceramics & Glass from the Royal College of Art and a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art & History of Art from Goldsmiths University of London. Her research, undertaken during her tenure at the Royal College of Art and using facilities at Imperial College London, earned her a coveted nomination for a 2023 D&AD Award in the Future Impact Category. Her work has been displayed at celebrated events and institutions such as Clerkenwell Design Week, the Saatchi Gallery, the Pumphouse Gallery, and Peckham Levels, among other notable group exhibitions in London. Key to Ekta's artistic practice is a dedication to 'sustaining, rejuvenating, and mending the world,' ensuring it remains a nurturing space for all.

Poojan Gupta is an artist based between London, Oxford, and Jaipur who has studied and worked internationally across the fields of contemporary art, design, philosophy, and medical science. Her practice explores the transformation and defamiliarization of everyday materials like discarded medical blister packs, which she transforms through processes of casting and print making into large-scale sculptural installations. Her recent research, drawing on the Pitt Rivers Museum's collections have begun to investigate how cultural ritualistic practices (such as votive offerings), spiritual beliefs, philosophy and theology, when combined with artistic interventions, can affect the mundane act of pill taking. She is also a Member of Royal Society of Sculptors (MRSS), London and an Associate Artist at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.

Chris Dorsett is a retired professor of Fine Art and an artist whose career has been built on curatorial partnerships with collection-holding institutions. In the UK he is best known for a sequence of exhibitions held at the Pitt Rivers Museum between 1985 and 1994. His many overseas projects include museum 'interventions' across the Nordic region and fieldwork residencies in the Amazon and at the walled village of *Kat Hing Wai* in the New Territories of Hong Kong. He has written extensively about the interface between experimental art practices and the museum/heritage sector. His publications include: 'Exhibitions and their prerequisites', in *Issues in curating: Contemporary art and performance* (2007); 'Making meaning beyond display', in *Museum materialities: Objects, engagements, interpretations* (2009); 'Things and theories: The unstable presence of exhibited objects', in *The thing about museums: Objects and experience, representation and contestation* (2011); and 'Studio ruins: Describing unfinishedness', in *Studies in Material Thinking*.

17:30 END